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Hong Kong

Market Development Reports

Hong Kong Government Changes Licensing Requirements for Imported Meat and Poultry 2000

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Report Highlights:

In a move that characterizes the changing priorities of food policy in Hong Kong, the SAR Government is removing meat and poultry from the list of reserved commodities, transferring the authority to issue import licenses from the Trade Department to the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD), and extending licensing requirements to chilled poultry to better protect public health.

Includes PSD changes: No
Includes Trade Matrix: No
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In a move that characterizes the changing priorities of food policy in Hong Kong, the SAR Government is removing meat and poultry from the list of reserved commodities, transferring the authority to issue import licenses from the Trade Department to the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD), and extending licensing requirements to chilled poultry to better protect public health.

As reserved commodities, minimum quantities of frozen meat, chilled meat and frozen poultry have been maintained in stock as required by the Reserved Commodities Ordinance. Importers have been required to register with the Director-General of Trade as stockholders and to submit monthly reports on import volumes. Because it is no longer suspected that a shortage of these vital food supplies could develop, a legislative amendment has been proposed to remove them from the reserved commodities list.

The same legislative amendment seeks to minimize the amount of meat and poultry products imported from mainland China without a valid health certificate by enhancing licensing control administered by the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD). Currently, there are incidents where poultry and meat products have been smuggled from China to Hong Kong without valid health certificates. Also, imports of chilled poultry products, which currently are not subject to licensing, will be brought under a licensing requirement under the proposed rule. The new measure proposes a maximum fine for imports without a licence HK\$500,000 (US\$1=HK\$7.78) and imprisonment of two years.

Under the proposed control scheme, no person may import into Hong Kong any frozen, chilled meat or poultry except under a licence issued by the Director of Food and Environmental Hygiene (FEHD). Application for an import licence has to be supported by an official certificate issued by a competent authority recognized by the Director of FEHD or the written permission of a health officer. Any person who imports into Hong Kong for personal consumption a quantity not exceeding 15 kg may be exempted from licensing control, provided that the meat or poultry in question is accompanied by a valid certificate.

Under the proposed amendment, an importer would have to apply for an import licence for every shipment and the license would be valid for 6 weeks. The new measure will not have any impact on U.S. meat and poultry exports to Hong Kong. U.S. poultry and meat shipments in the past have already been accompanied by USDA/FSIS certification. Under the new rule, the FEHD would continue to recognize the United States Department of Agriculture as a competent authority for issuing health certificates. (Note: importers bringing in U.S. ground meat already are required to apply for a permit from FEHD; that requirements will remain the same as before.)

The amendment regulations, subject to legislative approval, will take effect from August 1, 2000.